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GOVERNOR

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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Applications for Early College and Innovation Pathway Programs

New Applications will focus on growing and strengthening Massachusetts' Talent Pipeline

Boston, August 3, 2017....The Baker-Polito Administration today released applications for partnerships between high schools, colleges, and employers to become designated as Early College or Innovation Pathway programs, marking the first time such programs will adhere to a set of standards aimed at ensuring consistent quality while growing and supporting the state's talent pipeline. With the release of applications, school districts, institutions of higher education and industry partners are welcome to work jointly to submit proposals that will allow their programs to receive formal designation by the state.

"The Commonwealth's Early College and Innovation Pathway programs play an important role in encouraging many young people to pursue higher education, while exposing them to high-demand career opportunities," **Governor Charlie Baker said**. "Our Administration is committed to significantly increasing the number of early college seats available to students over the next decade and today's announcement is an important first step toward that goal."

Early College programs are partnerships between high schools and colleges that provide students with the opportunity to experience and complete college-level coursework in a rigorous and supportive environment, while simultaneously gaining exposure to a variety of career opportunities. To be designated an early college program, high schools will need to offer students at no cost the opportunity to earn a minimum of 12 college credits prior to graduation.

Innovation Pathways are partnerships between high schools and local employers that connect student learning to broadly-defined industry sectors that are in demand in the regional and state economy. Participation in this kind of pathway can lead students to opportunities for meaningful careers, while preparing for postsecondary education and training. Based on current jobs data provided by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Innovation Pathway will focus on manufacturing, information, healthcare, professional and scientific industry sectors.

"By encouraging the development of these new career-oriented Innovation Pathways, the Commonwealth will see stronger pipelines of students ready to succeed after graduation, whether they go directly into the workforce or enroll in college," **Lt. Governor Karyn Polito said**. "Helping high school students get a head start on careers, especially in high-demand STEM fields, will help us continue to grow our knowledge-based economy."

Through the combined efforts of the Department of Higher Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Commonwealth has developed a set of guiding principles that provide a powerful context for all high-quality college and career pathways (HQCCPs), as well as a more specific set of characteristics that define these pathways:

- Equitable access
- Guided academic pathway
- Enhanced student support
- Relevant connection to career
- Deep partnerships between high schools, community colleges, state universities and industry

Embedded within those principles are the core elements of a high-quality college and career pathway:

- Alignment with labor market data
- College and career counseling
- Technical coursework
- Work-based learning, such as internships
- Post-secondary links
- Credential attainment

"Early College programs will give students, especially those who are the first in their family to attend college, a chance to build academic credentials and begin to seriously explore their career potential," **said Higher Education Commissioner Carlos E. Santiago**. "What's exciting about this new approach is the ability to enroll entire cohorts of students in college

coursework, allowing many more to earn college credit, save thousands of dollars, and explore career options they might not otherwise have considered."

"We are confident that both early college and innovation pathways will help engage students and prepare them for success after school to be ready for both college and careers," **Acting Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education Jeff Wulfson said.** "We are proud to work with our partners in higher education and industry for students' benefit."

Through the designation process, the Departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education are asking K-12 schools to work with colleges or industry partners to jointly design models of Early College or Innovation Pathway programs. Schools can also apply for competitive \$10,000 planning grants, with up to \$100,000 available through resources from the state's STEM Advisory Council and the New Skills for Youth Grant, which the state received in January from JP Morgan Chase and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Additional information about the early college and innovation pathway programs, including applications, can be found [here](#).

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